

Section Thirteen

A description of the committee which participated in the development of the State plan in accordance with section 255 and the procedures followed by the committee under such section and section 256 of HAVA.

As New Jersey's Chief Election Official, Attorney General Peter C. Harvey undertook to form a diverse committee of individuals with a demonstrated commitment to the State's election process and who are notably interested in improving elections for the benefit of all of our citizens. Selection decisions were made in conformance with the criteria set forth in HAVA. First, the chief election officials for the two largest jurisdictions in the State were appointed. In New Jersey, these officials are Carmine Casciano, the Essex County Superintendent of Elections, and Patricia DiConstanza, the Bergen County Superintendent of Elections. Superintendent Casciano has been in office for the past 13 years and is a former Essex County Freeholder. Superintendent DiConstanza has been an election official for the past 17 years, having previously served as a member of the Bergen County Board of Election.

HAVA further required that representatives of disability groups be on the SPC. Attorney General Harvey appointed Sheri-Rose Rubin, Esq., of the New Jersey Protection and Advocacy, Inc., a private, non-profit, consumer-directed corporation dedicated to protecting the civil, human, and legal rights of individuals with disabilities, which is the designated protection and advocacy system for individuals with disabilities in New Jersey. On election days, this office places attorneys in the counties to assist any voter with disabilities. Ethan Ellis, of the Monday Morning Project, was also appointed. This group promotes registration, education and accessibility for voters with disabilities.

Section 254 of the Act further required that local election officials be on the SPC. The following individuals come within this category. Joanne Armbruster, the Atlantic County Superintendent of Elections, is also the newly-elected President of the New Jersey State Association of Election Officials and was chosen by her county election official colleagues to be one of the two New Jersey representatives for the yet-to-be established federal Standards Board. She brings over 30 years of experience as a County Board of Election member and Superintendent of Elections. James Parent, the Chief Clerk of the Cumberland County Board of Election, has been in the election field for close to 30 years. Mr. Parent is also a former President of the New Jersey League of Municipalities. Jane Williams-Warren is the Municipal Clerk of the City of Paterson, Passaic County, which has non-partisan municipal elections in May and for which the Clerk has substantial electoral duties. Ms. Warren-Williams is chiefly responsible for the development and teaching of an innovative master board worker program in Passaic County, which has been most effective in assisting voters and board workers on election days. Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi heads an election division in her office that is responsible for the printing of election ballots and absentee ballot applications. Union County has used electronic voting equipment for elections for the past seven years, so her expertise in this area assisted one of the core missions of HAVA.



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The Act also mandated the chief election official to appoint a variety of citizens to the SPC. Attorney General Harvey chose Juan Cartagena, Esq., a New Jersey resident and a public interest lawyer who works for the Community Service Society of New York. Mr. Cartagena has been involved with some of the most significant lawsuits relating to the conduct of elections in New Jersey, one of which was the catalyst for statutory reform protecting the right of any voter not to be challenged on his or her right to vote on racial, ethnic or political preference grounds. Mr. Cartagena was also instrumental in developing the voter registration and voting procedures for qualified voters residing in state psychiatric hospitals. Mr. Cartagena is also a member of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey.

Two other members of the SPC are associated with Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey. Ernest Reock, a retired Professor, is affiliated with the Rutgers Center for Government Services, whose mission is to conduct educational courses for such governmental officials as county tax board members, housing authority board members and municipal clerks. Part of the curriculum for the clerks encompasses their election duties. Professor Reock is also noted for his expertise in redistricting. Ingrid Reed is with the Eagleton Institute of Politics, which studies a variety of public issues and conducts public opinion polls. Ms. Reed, whose specific interests relate to campaigns and elections from the point of view of the voter, recently completed a study of the 2001 New Jersey election.

The following members of the SPC are members of public interest organizations that promote voter participation. Sandra Matsen is a past President of the New Jersey League of Women Voters, a non-partisan group, nationally-renowned for voter education, in part, by the sponsorship of pre-election candidate forums. Marilyn Askin is the President of the New Jersey AARP, which represents senior citizens, a segment of society with a strong record of voter participation. Lionel Leach, a New Jersey resident, is the East Coast Regional Director for the NAACP National Voter Fund. Throughout the country, the NAACP has long stood for protecting the right of all citizens to have a voice in the democratic process. Mr. Leach has also been directly involved in educational programs for young voters. That is the core mission of the national organization known as Freedom's Answer and for which SPC member Cole Kleitsch spearheads the New Jersey Chapter. Mr. Kleitsch has recently been involved in the implementation of a recent state law that permits 16 and 17 year old students to act as board workers. Charles Wowkanech is the President of the New Jersey AFL-CIO, which has long been involved in voter registration. Denise Velazquez-Marrero worked as the South Jersey representative for the office of Puerto Rico Federal Affairs, which conducts voter registration drives within the Hispanic communities in the State. She is now with the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles, which is a voter registration agency.

The SPC held its organizational work session on May 12, 2003 and met thereafter on a regular basis. Commencing with the third session, the sessions were open to the public to observe the discussion. Eight public hearings were held in various locations around the State. During the course of its work sessions, the SPC posted information regarding its work on the Department of Law and Public Safety website, in which it invited written public comment. The Preliminary Plan was made available for public comment on June 20, 2003. The comment period ended on August 4, 2003.